

The Planning Process: The Foundation of Disaster Resistance

An effective hazard mitigation planning process is the critical first step in making your community more disaster resistant. The programs described previously can serve as the building blocks for this process by providing technical and sometimes financial planning assistance to communities. Through the planning process, you can identify the hazards that threaten your community, assess your vulnerability to them, and build consensus on approaches to mitigating them. This process leads to the identification of cost-effective, environmentally sound mitigation measures. In fact, the planning process is so critical to

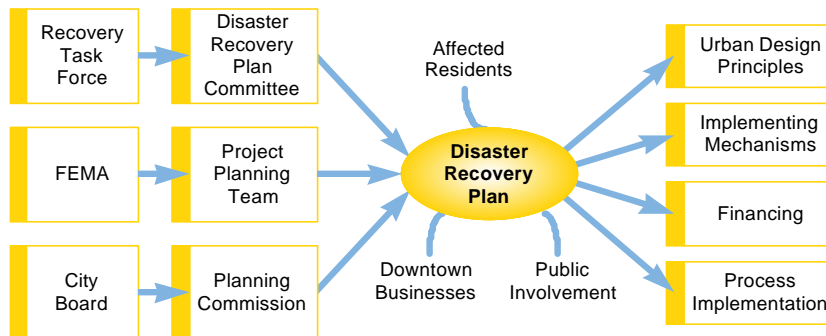
implementation of effective mitigation measures that some of the programs, described previously, that are intended to fund mitigation measures, require a mitigation plan as a condition of such funding.

The planning process is as important as the plan itself. Your community can follow a general 10-step process that incorporates the classic planning approach of gathering information, setting goals, reviewing alternatives, and deciding upon which actions to take. The steps are:

1. **Organize to prepare the plan.** Selecting the right person to lead the planning effort is important.
2. **Involve the public.** Emphasize participation of key stakeholders,

Creating a better future depends, in part, on the knowledge and involvement of citizens and on a decision-making process that embraces and encourages differing perspectives of those affected by governmental policy. Steps toward a more sustainable future include developing community-driven strategic planning and collaborative regional planning; improving community and building design; decreasing sprawl; and creating strong, diversified local economies while increasing jobs and other economic opportunities.

Wingspread II Conference,
Communities in Harm's Way



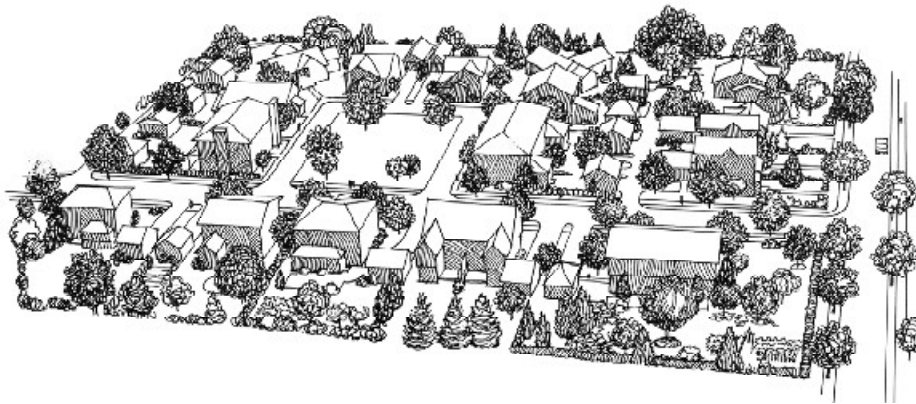
A recovery planning process that involves both small focused workshops and public informational meetings.

The world we have created today as a result of our thinking thus far has problems which cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them.

Albert Einstein

including at-risk homeowners, business owners, managers of critical facilities, and technical staff.

3. **Coordinate with other agencies and organizations.** They can provide technical assistance and inform the community of relevant activities and programs that can support your efforts.
4. **Assess the hazard.** Identify the particular hazards affecting your community and the risks they pose to your community's critical infrastructure.
5. **Evaluate the problem.** Getting participants to agree on a problem statement is the first step in reaching consensus on solutions to the problem.
6. **Set goals.** Establish goals as positive and achievable statements that people can work towards.
7. **Review possible strategies and measures.** Include a range of hazard mitigation measures for consideration. While some measures may be quickly eliminated, others should be evaluated carefully to determine how they work as well as their costs and benefits.
8. **Draft an action plan.** Keep it brief. Include sections on how the plan was prepared, recommended mitigation actions, and a budget and schedule.
9. **Formally adopt the plan.** Gaining public acceptance is vital to reducing conflicts, building support for the recommendations, and getting the plan formally adopted. Keep the public informed and educated so they will readily accept the plan.
10. **Implement, evaluate, and revise the plan.** Develop procedures to measure progress, assess strengths and weaknesses, and decide on necessary changes.



Concept design for redevelopment of a neighborhood in Arkadelphia, illustrating a diversity of housing types, including single-family detached, attached single-family and multi-family units.



Wetlands provide an important flood storage function in many watersheds.

Overcoming Barriers to Hazard Mitigation

Communities face a number of barriers to implementing hazard reduction measures. Two major obstacles are the public's misunderstanding of risk and the fact that most people do not want to believe that their community will ever experience a disaster, much less experience another if they've already been through one. The best way to deal with these issues is to educate your community and build a consensus about its vulnerability to natural hazards. Get all of your community's key interests (business, industry, organizations, and neighborhood groups) involved. This encourages a sense of ownership of the problem and, sometimes, of the difficult choices that may have to be made. Your community will have to balance individual property rights against the need to protect public health, safety, and welfare. Short-term advantages

Oregon's Statewide Land-Use Planning Effort

In 1996, FEMA estimated that Oregon saves about \$10 million a year in flood losses averted because of strong land-use planning. How did they do it? Twenty-five years ago, Oregon created 19 statewide land-use planning goals. Goal 7 calls for local plans to include inventories, policies, and ordinances to guide development in hazard areas, thereby reducing losses from flooding, landslides, earthquakes, and wildfires. Specifically, the goal states, "Developments subject to damage or that could result in loss of life shall not be planned nor located in known areas of natural disasters and hazards without appropriate safeguards." Implementing this goal into all land-use developments in the last 25 years has made Oregon's rate of community participation in the NFIP the highest in the nation. Furthermore, many Oregon jurisdictions have instituted floodplain management standards that exceed NFIP minimum requirements. Oregon also has 14 communities participating in the CRS, making the State particularly resistant to flood damages.

But it isn't just Goal 7 that makes Oregon's land-use planning process successful. Other goals outline the importance of protecting farmland. Oregon communities are typically more densely populated, creating less urban sprawl, which in turn means more rural areas. More rural, unpopulated areas create more open space that can be left for floodwaters. Other goals adopted protect forests, helping to prevent over-developed mountain slopes that could lead to landslide damages. Coastal areas have instituted building codes to address seismic concerns, and no critical facilities can be built in mapped tsunami wash zones.

Independently, none of these goals explains Oregon's extraordinary success at avoiding disaster damages. But together, they have created a natural co-existence between disastrous events and man-made development.